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SUBJECT: TOGO -- FIRST MEETING OF NATIONAL COUNCIL TO FIGHT  
HIV/AIDS

¶1. (U) Charge attended the first session of the CNLS/IST (National Committee for the Fight Against HIV/AIDS and Sexually-Transmitted Diseases) on March 30. The session was presided over by President Faure Gnassingbe, who is the Chairman of the CNLS. The CNLS presented a strategy document for fighting HIV/AIDS in the 2007 to 2010 timeframe and listened to testimony from NGOs, members of government, and members of civil society on the effect of HIV/AIDS on the people of Togo.

¶2. (U) The strategy has six areas of concentration:

First: Boost prevention activities.  
Prevention programs will target sex workers, youth, both students and school-leavers, and women. Programs include increased voluntary testing, extension of efforts to prevent mother-to-child transmission, improved diagnosis and treatment of sexually transmitted diseases, promotion of condom use and improved testing of transfusion blood supplies.

Second: Provide treatment and assistance for those affected by HIV/AIDS.  
Currently about 6,000 people are receiving ARV therapy subsidized by the Global Fund and the GoT. NGOs are assisting 4,600 people living with HIV and the plan calls for increased assistance with counseling and nutrition. The GoT projects that, with its NGO partners under the leadership of UNICEF Togo, care will be provided to 7,500 orphans and vulnerable children in 2008.

Third: Promote human rights in the battle against stigmatization.  
In December 2005 the GoT passed a law protecting HIV/AIDS sufferers. With the aid of several UN agency partners, the law against stigmatization will be publicized through the country.

Fourth: Promote HIV/AIDS research.  
The GoT is seeking partners for a North-South or South-South cooperation on research.

Fifth: Improve the national system of follow up and evaluation to measure the impact of activities in the fight against HIV/AIDS and STDs.

Sixth: Improve management and coordination of activities in the fight against HIV/AIDS and STDs.

¶3. (U) Budget: The summary of money budgeted for these six

areas of concentration in the fight against HIV/AIDS in Togo in the 2007-2010 timeframe follows:

First	Prevention	USD	39.9 million
Second	Treatment and Care	USD	59.8 million
Third	Human Rights	USD	2.0 million
Fourth	Research	USD	2.9 million
Fifth	Evaluation	USD	7.9 million
Sixth	Coordination	USD	11.0 million
	Total:	USD	123.5 million

14. (SBU) Comment: What was remarkable about the rollout of the strategy was the fact that President Faure and nearly every member of the top echelon of the government was present for the whole meeting, which went from 08h00 to 16h00. In conversation with Charge, some UN colleagues were critical of the budgeting in the document, which called for expenditures of USD 120 million over four years. While the goal and suggested allocation of resources is commendable, as a practical matter, the reality is that Togo has no capacity to absorb this amount of funding. In 2006 the Global Fund cut off a grant one year early for poor management. On the other hand, one has to give credit to President Faure for spending a whole day with all his ministers and advisors listening to presentations on the need for prevention, treatment, and orphans' care in the fight against HIV/AIDS. It sends a clear message that the GoT is committed to fight HIV/AIDS. When Faure named the new Government of National Union after the signing of the Global Political Accord with opposition parties in August 2006, his choice for Minister of Health was a seasoned minister with the personal rank of Minister of State (one of only three Ministers of State in a 30-member cabinet). This was a welcome change from his predecessor, who was well-meaning but ineffectual managing a government ministry. The prevalence rate of HIV/AIDS in Togo is thought to be around 4 per cent. Post hopes that high-level attention

from the GoT will be instrumental in driving it lower. End Comment.

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